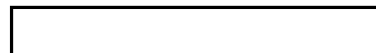


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
25 August 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION  
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HIGHLIGHTS

25X1 [redacted] who defected recently in South Vietnam has supplied tactical information which is being used in support of Operation DECK HOUSE/TOLEDO. He has also reported on sea infiltration and has confirmed North Vietnamese politburo member Nguyen Chi Thanh as the number one Communist in the South.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

One of three battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division participating in Operation AMARILLO has reported establishing heavy contact with an estimated battalion-size enemy force (Para. 1). The 5th Viet Cong Division continues its activities in coastal Phuoc Tuy Province (Paras. 3-7). A Communist defector describes enemy intentions to achieve victories during the rainy season (Paras. 8-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

A public address by Premier Ky today signified the beginning of the two-week election campaign in South Vietnam (Para. 1). In the provinces, numerous reports of Viet Cong and Buddhist plans to disrupt the election continue to be received, including indications of a general Viet Cong military step-up between now and election day (Para. 2). A recently captured document provides a Communist estimate of the number of people in VC-controlled territory (Para. 3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

[redacted] reports on sea infiltration (Paras. 1-2).

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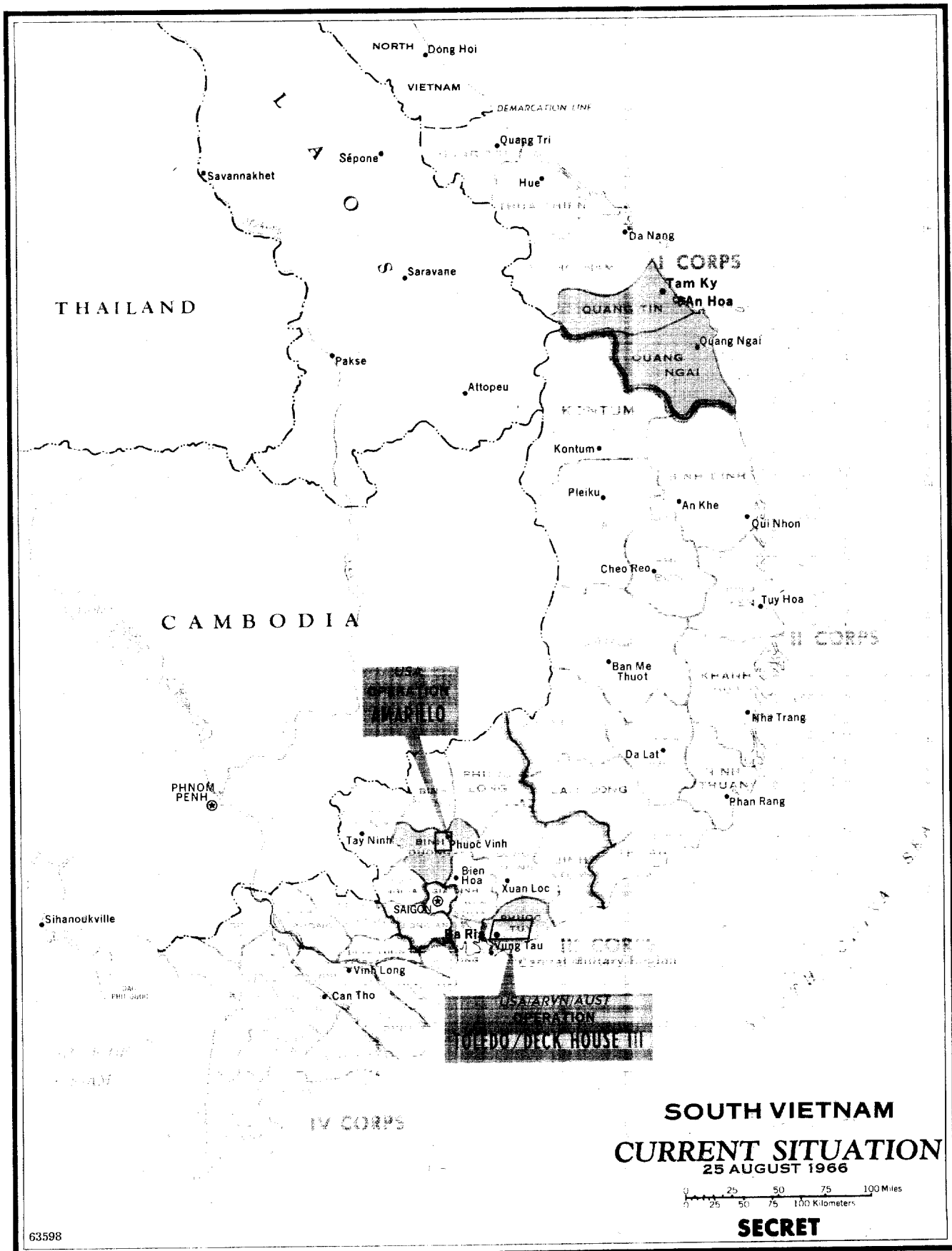
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

[redacted] who defected recently in South Vietnam reports that Nguyen Chi Thanh is the number one Communist in the South and identifies other North Vietnamese generals who are also in the South. (Paras. 1-2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Operation AMARILLO, which has been operating as a one-battalion route-clearing operation under the control of the US 1st Infantry Division, has been upgraded to a three-battalion operation because of heavy contact with the enemy. This operation has the mission of securing a section of road in Binh Duong Province. Contact was reported today with an estimated battalion-size Viet Cong force by one of the US battalions in an area about 28 miles north of Saigon. There have been no reports of casualties.

2. Operation DECK HOUSE III and Operation TOLEDO have been combined into one large operation. Participating US, South Vietnamese, and Australian troops continue to sweep Phuoc Tuy Province in an effort to locate the nearly 5,000 Communist troops reported to be in this area.

Communist Situation in Phuoc Tuy Province

3. Since late 1965, it has been known that the 5th Viet Cong Division--composed of the 274th and 275th VC Regiments--is located in Phuoc Tuy Province. The division reportedly has been augmented by about one North Vietnamese infantry battalion, but there is as yet no confirmation as to whether the North Vietnamese unit remains intact or has been split up among the Viet Cong regiments.

4. Acting on information provided by [redacted] units of the Australian task force began searching for the Viet Cong provincial party headquarters on 17 August. [redacted]

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5.

During the early morning of 17 August, Communist forces mounted a mortar attack against the task force base area. On 18 August, one company of Australian Rangers, patrolling east of the base, was engaged by an enemy force estimated at two battalions. Allied air strikes and reinforcements turned the encounter into a major victory for the Australians and more than 250 enemy troops were reported killed.

6. Preliminary interrogation of three prisoners taken in the 18 August engagement indicated that North Vietnamese troops were involved in both actions. One of the prisoners was a Viet Cong and two were North Vietnamese.

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Communist Defector Claims Significant Victories Needed

8. Under interrogation, a North Vietnamese

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He stated that if the South Vietnamese Marines participating in Operation COLORADO in Quang Tin Province had landed a half-mile farther west in an air assault, they would have captured the regimental command post. The Regiment reportedly reassembled in an area about 20 miles west of Tam Ky after the US Marines had left the area. The regimental commander was also reported to have received orders to move the regiment to Quang Ngai Province.

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9. The policy for the 620th NVA Division during the rainy season, according to the defector, is to attack the An Hoa industrial complex and other targets in the southern Quang Tin Province area, since significant victories were needed to "prevent a Johnson victory in the coming congressional elections."

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## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Ky today officially opened the two-week election campaign with a public address appealing for a large voter turnout but warning that Viet Cong terrorism could be expected to increase. Ky also reportedly pledged that the elections would be conducted honestly, and invited foreign diplomats and newsmen to travel where they pleased to observe the campaign. Saigon newspapers--apparently freed from normal censorship restrictions during the campaign--featured election material with the exception of one Buddhist-sponsored paper, which ignored the opening of the campaign in accordance with the Buddhists' election boycott. Antigovernment Buddhist students, reportedly planning to march on the US Embassy today, called off their attempt when only a handful of students assembled.

2. In the provinces, numerous reports of Viet Cong and Buddhist plans to disrupt the elections continue to be received. In addition to the usual Viet Cong techniques of harassment, terrorism, and sabotage, evidence gathered in such scattered provinces as Dinh Tuong in the delta and Binh Thuan on the central coast suggests that the Viet Cong may be planning a significant step-up in over-all military action, including attacks on government military installations between now and election day. A captured document indicates that a particular military effort may be made by the Viet Cong on 2 September, a day celebrated by the Communists as "National Day" marking the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

### Communist Estimates of VC Control

3. A captured document written at the end of November 1965 contains a relatively candid assessment of the extent of Communist control in South Vietnam. US estimates range from three to five million people in VC-controlled areas. Prior to the capture of this document, the only Communist estimate of the population under their control was provided in their propaganda

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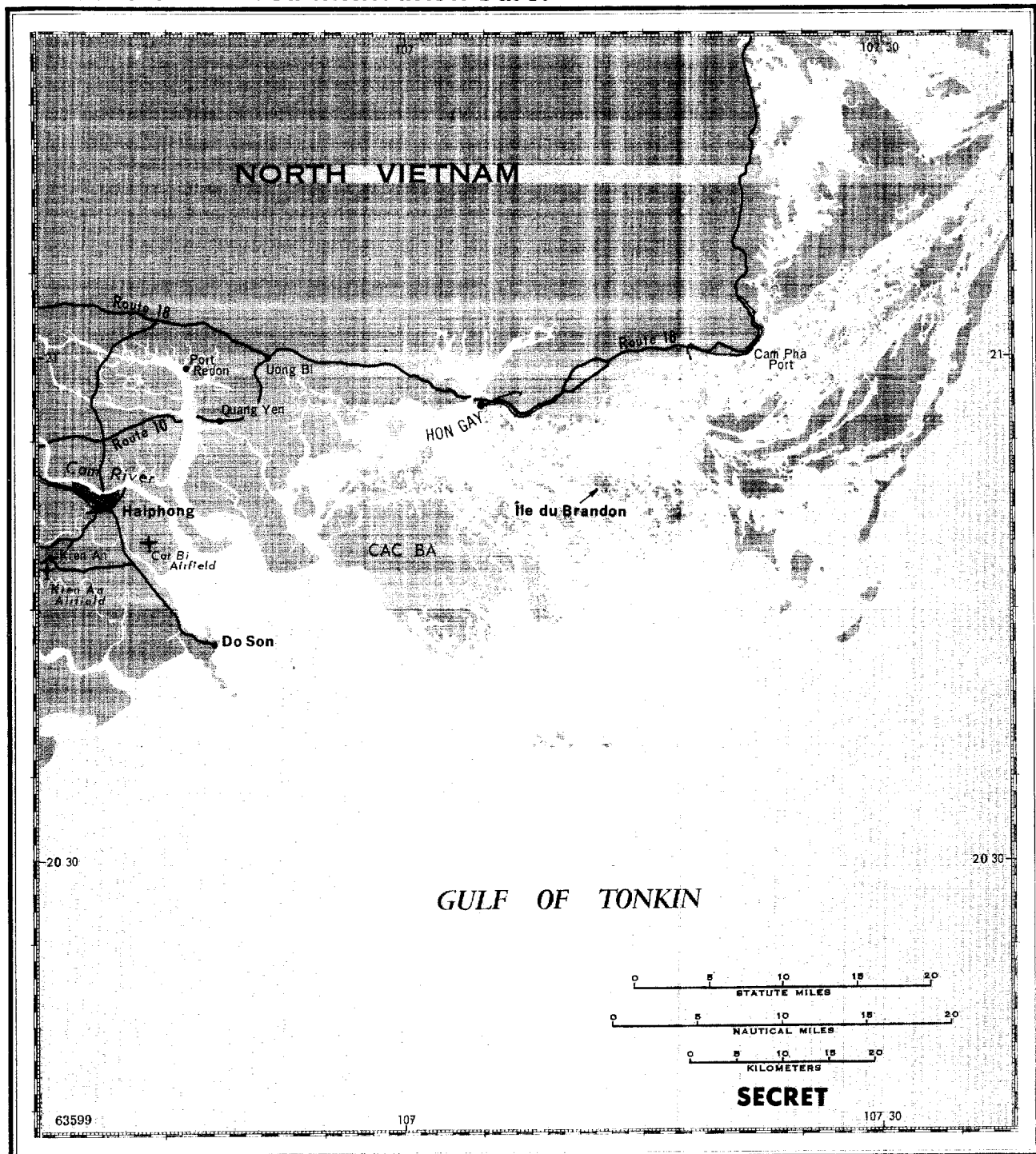
claim of more than ten million people. The captured document puts the VC figure at a more conservative six million for "liberated areas," with another three million in the areas under "mixed" or contested control. This estimate is not far out of line with the upper range of US estimates, and it may not have taken into account the hundreds of thousands of people who have fled Communist-controlled areas in the past year (750,000 between May and November 1965 when the document was written).

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## Probable DRV Sea Infiltration Bases



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### III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1.

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[redacted] who recently defected in the south has contributed further information on DRV sea infiltration activities. The source claims that [redacted] he sailed from Haiphong harbor aboard a steel-hulled trawler which carried more than 100 tons of arms and ammunition. The trip was reported to have taken seven days and terminated in Kien Hoa Province in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam. [redacted] stated that the Haiphong base from which he departed was a walled area near the ferry landing on the north side of the Cam River. Photoanalysis has identified a walled installation in the area designated by the source. The defector estimated that the North Vietnamese had as many as 31 such trawlers assigned to infiltration.

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2. The source's description of the seaborne infiltration system parallels information provided by two other sources, [redacted]

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[redacted] The latter source described the craft used for sea infiltration in essentially the same terms as [redacted] and added that they were disguised to resemble Chinese fishing trawlers. [redacted] reported that a strictly guarded pier area at Do Son was used as a loading and assembly point for boats destined for South Vietnam. The same source stated that six infiltration trawlers were normally anchored in the vicinity of Isle du Brandon, about 20 miles east of Haiphong. [redacted] concluded that the continuing presence of a fixed number of craft at the island, despite frequent arrivals and departures, suggested a larger inventory available for sea infiltration activities.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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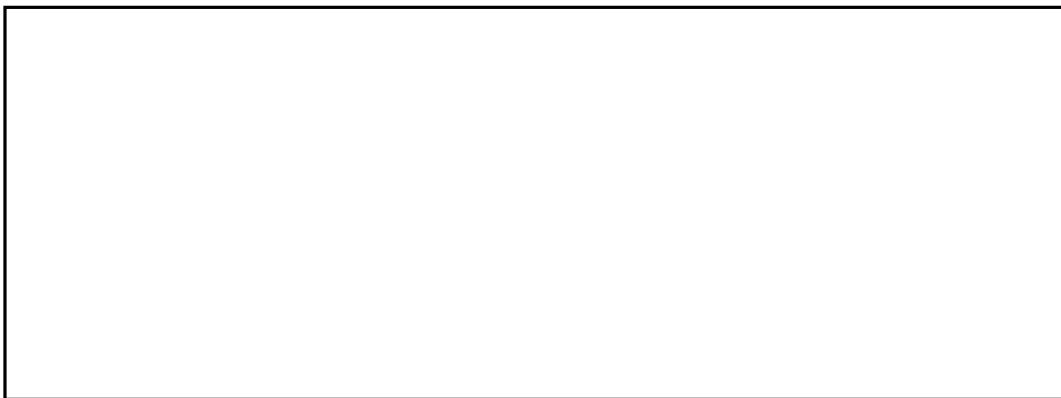
V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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1. [REDACTED]

who recently defected in South Vietnam and whose reporting appears to be accurate confirms the rumors that North Vietnamese politburo member Nguyen Chi Thanh is in South Vietnam. According to the source, Nguyen Chi Thanh is the number one Communist in South Vietnam, heading both the political and military apparatus. His titles include Political Officer of COSVN, Regional Party Secretary, and Commander of the Liberation Armed Forces. Two other North Vietnamese generals who are alternate central committee members are also now at COSVN, according to the source. Tran Van Tra is serving as Deputy Military Commander. Under the name Tran Nam Trung, Tra is listed by the NFLSV as Chief of the Front's Military Affairs Committee and Commander of the Liberation Army. Tran Do is Nguyen Chi Thanh's deputy political officer, and uses the name Truong Son. Truong Son recently wrote a blistering attack on critics of Nguyen Chi Thanh's stewardship in the South which was published in the North Vietnamese press. Another North Vietnamese general, Le Trong Tan, is head of COSVN's operation staff, according to the defector.

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